

★ CHICAGO'S ★ SAFE AMBASSADORS

STREETS ARE FOR EVERYBODY

Report
2022



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Executive Summary

The SAFE (Streets Are For Everybody) Ambassador program is the Chicago Department of Transportation's (CDOT) safety education and engagement team. This 2022 SAFE final report provides insight into our 21st year of traffic safety education and engagement programming for CDOT.

CDOT's pedestrian and bicycle safety education initiative began as the Bike Ambassadors in 2001 with funding from a federal safety grant administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). Over the years, funding has also been provided by the Divvy bike-share system, with additional resources allocated by CDOT. In 2017, Chicago committed to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries with the release of the Vision Zero Action Plan. This led the way for our program to be rebranded as the SAFE Ambassadors.

CDOT's education and engagement arm may have changed its name and branding, but we uphold the same goals and mission to educate all Chicagoans on how to walk, bike, scoot, take public transit, and drive safely. We are proud of how the SAFE program has grown and we are excited to expand our reach.



The SAFE Ambassador program goals are:

1. Educate Chicagoans about safe driving behaviors
2. Increase the number of people who choose to bike, walk, or take public transit to get to their destinations
3. Reduce the number of traffic-related injuries and fatalities
4. Encourage and educate people on how to share the road



The SAFE Ambassadors pivoted to digital engagement in 2020 to meet the challenges of the pandemic lockdown, but as the world started reopening in 2021, our operations and strategies included a mix of in-person and digital engagement. This pivot allowed us this year to meet people where they're at, as we continued to provide effective and impactful engagement both online and in person. Examples of our new or modified programming include the addition of Kids Learn to Ride classes and incorporating dementia awareness into our SAFE senior education.

2022 also gave our team the opportunity to reach bigger audiences and collaborate with new partners. SAFE Ambassadors earned certifications as Child Passenger Safety Technicians, which allowed us to connect directly with parent motorists about roadway safety, in addition to our ongoing SAFE Routes to School programming. To address traffic safety as a public health issue, our team partnered with public health practitioners at RUSH University Medical Center who utilized our team's expertise in mobility education to engage seniors and their caregivers about pedestrian safety in Vision Zero High-Crash Areas.

2022 marked a year of growth for the SAFE Ambassadors team, laying the groundwork for more active and impactful seasons to come.



Our Reach

As communities all over Chicago became more comfortable hosting and attending in-person events, we returned to engaging with people directly while expanding our digital presence to share traffic safety information. We continued to spread the word about traffic safety by providing educational literature, supporting community bike rides, and participating in local events and hosting our own.

Our team of Ambassadors engaged with more than 21,000 people, at 308 events spanning the entire city. In partnership with the Chicago Park District, we were able to connect with summer day campers, ages 6 to 12, at 82 parks. We were also able to return to our classroom engagement, completing 43 in-person visits at 34 schools and assisting another 50 elementary schools with digital presentations.

This year we implemented new programs, including Car Seat Safety Checks, where Ambassadors ensure children's car seats are safely installed while also engaging with motorists about transportation safety. We also began our new Kids Learn to Ride program which provides classes specifically tailored for children who want to learn how to ride bikes. We also responded to elected officials' requests for traffic education and worked with other CDOT staff to spread the word about infrastructure updates.



**Attended 308
events all over
the city**

**Engaged with
more than 21,000
Chicagoans**



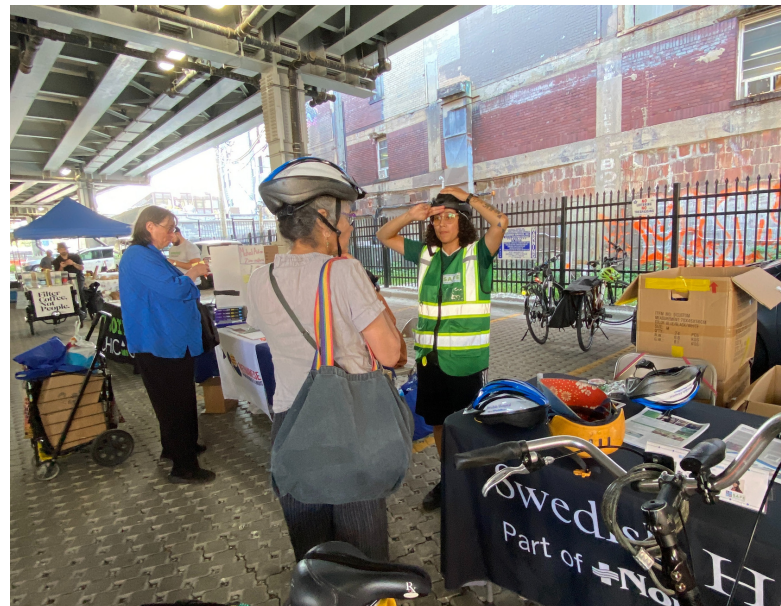
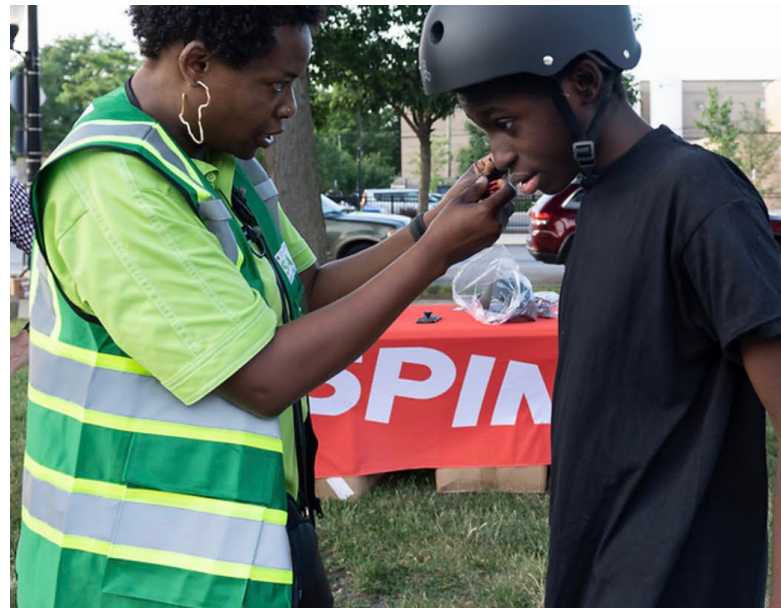
Helmet giveaway partners:

- Swedish Covenant and Lurie Children's hospitals
- Spin and Lime Scooters

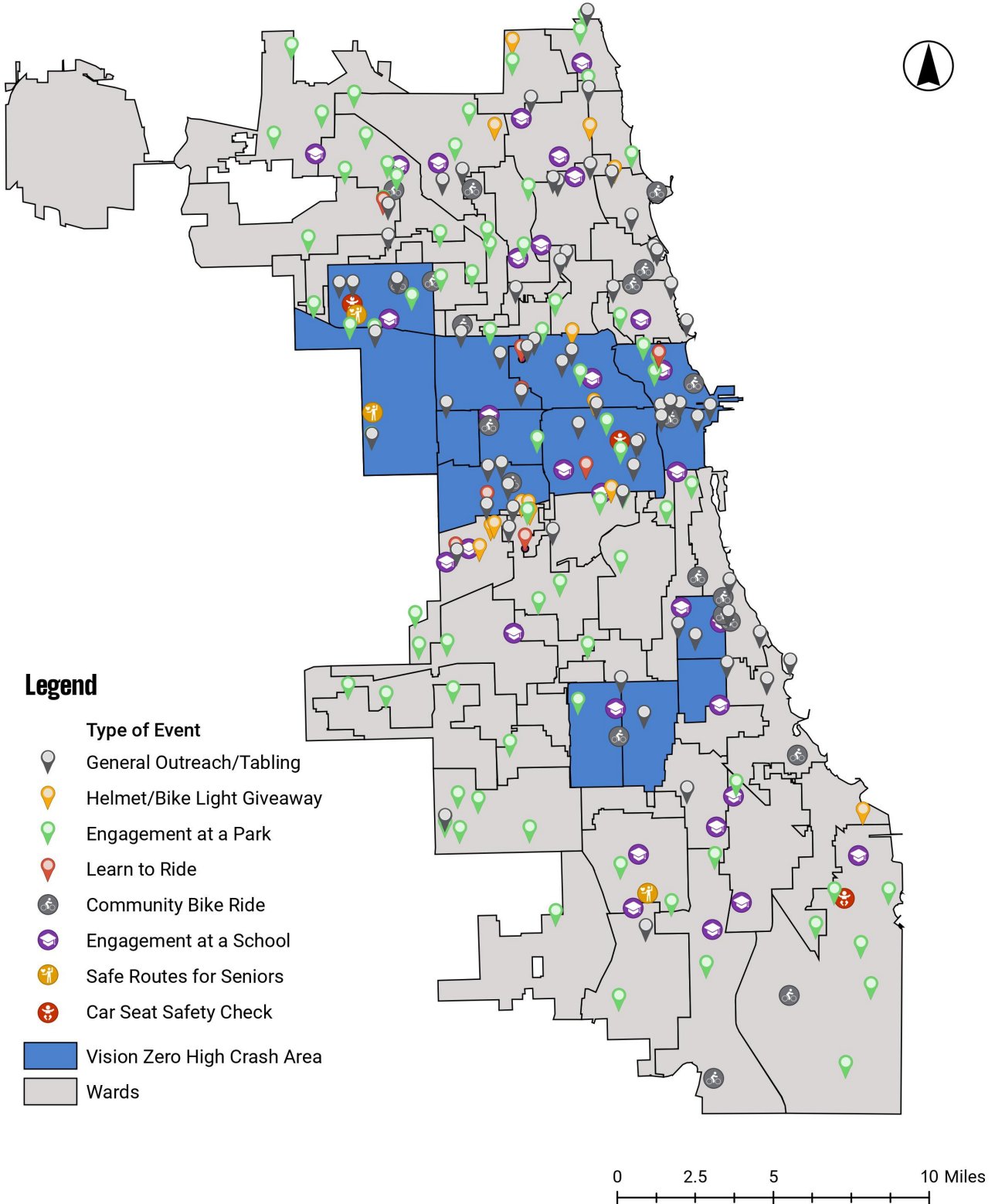
In addition to our yearly partnership with Swedish Covenant Hospital, we expanded our helmet education and outreach with electric scooter companies Spin and Lime to provide free helmets for people who needed them. We also received a generous helmet donation from Lurie Children's Hospital for our Kids Learn to Ride students. These helmets were provided free of charge and included a custom helmet fitting by one of our SAFE Ambassadors. This year, our team conducted 14 bike light and helmet giveaways and provided individualized helmet fittings to 1,952 Chicagoans.

Provided 1,952 individual helmet fittings to Chicagoans

Conducted 14 bike light/helmet giveaways



Map of Events



Community Bike Rides

Neighborhood-focused rides are an excellent opportunity for the SAFE team to engage with the biking community and others who live, work, and travel through the community. At such rides, the SAFE Ambassadors offered helmet checks, bicycle safety checks, and pre-ride presentations to teach participants best practices for group rides. Ambassadors play an important role in supporting these rides by maintaining the structure and safety of the rides, stopping traffic at intersections (corking), and riding alongside participants.

This summer, we were able to attend and assist at 22 community bike rides (See *Appendix B on page 15 for a full list of the 2022 Community Rides*). We continued to maintain and build new relationships with organizations that support equitable mobility and partnered to keep everyone safe.

We take pride in helping rides run smoothly and are always willing to rally up a squad to keep everybody safe on the street!



Engagement

Community rides are only one instance of SAFE team engagement. In an effort to meet folks where they're at, the SAFE Ambassadors also had a presence at numerous community events throughout the city. This included handing out safety literature, speaking to participants about CDOT projects, offering riding tips, and giving away free SAFE Ambassador and Vision Zero Chicago swag.

Vision Zero Chicago (VZC) is the City's commitment and approach to eliminating serious injuries and fatalities from traffic crashes. The City of Chicago and the SAFE Ambassadors believe that even one life lost in a traffic crash is unacceptable. We all have the right to walk, bike, take public transit, and drive on streets that are safe for everybody, regardless of where we are coming from or going to.

Traffic safety is a shared responsibility. To help spread awareness, VZC and the SAFE Ambassadors practiced outreach and delivered resources with a focus on equity and inclusive community engagement. Of the 308 events the SAFE Ambassadors attended, 45% of them were held in Vision Zero High-Crash Areas or close to Vision Zero High-Crash Corridors. We worked with organizations to engage in any way we could, supporting community bike rides such as the Bikes, Breath, & Environmental Justice ride with Equiticity, and staffing events such as National Night Out and Bike the Drive.

Our regular school engagement focused particularly on campuses in the Vision Zero South Side and Vision Zero Northwest Side planning areas—High-Crash Areas where CDOT is creating community-based traffic safety plans.



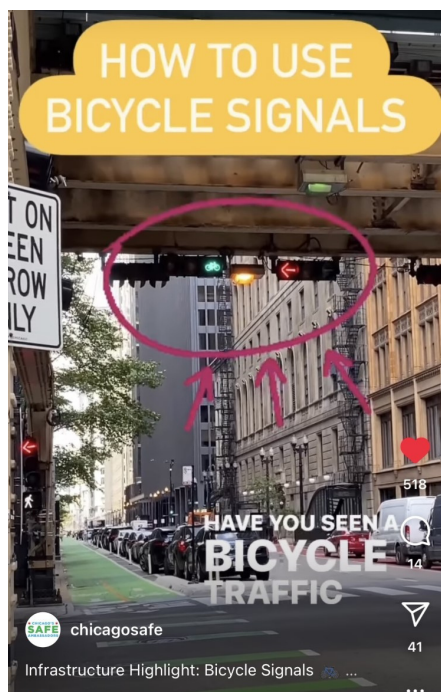
**45% of our events
were held in Vision
Zero High-Crash
Areas or close to
Vision Zero High-
Crash Corridors**



Online engagement is an effective way for our team to reach a wider audience and get creative doing so. This year we shifted to short-form social media content. Through TikTok videos and Instagram Reels, we created quick, one-minute videos that are more accessible for viewers. Our successful short-form educational efforts reached a record-high 140,225 accounts this year.

Some highlights from our SAFE online engagement include:

- [How to Use Bicycle Signals](#), a video on bike traffic signals. This video was very popular on our Instagram account reaching 37,434 viewers and 518 likes.
- [Pedestrians Have Right-of-Way at Crosswalks](#), a video which took a viral trend and spun it to educate all road users.



Our team shared virtual lessons and presentations with 50 schools and an additional 34 schools hosted us in person. We explored the topic of "getting around" with elementary school students, focusing on walking safety for second graders and biking safety for fifth graders. Our lessons invited young Chicagoans to consider the risks and rewards associated with sharing public spaces such as streets and sidewalks.

The Ambassadors also collaborated with Working Bikes, a local organization, to facilitate an after-school bike club focused on learning basic bike mechanics and safety tips. Held at Eli Whitney Elementary School in the Little Village neighborhood, this bike club introduced young riders to a range of beginner to advanced cycling drills. The program was successful and provided us with insight and inspiration for future elementary lessons.



**Reached 84
schools
digitally and
in-person**

During our high school driver's education classes, we educated future drivers on how to safely share the road with people walking and biking. The Ambassadors facilitated presentations at 47 driver's education classes. With the Vision Zero Chicago goals in mind, we held important conversations with the next generation of road users and prepared young people with the perspective and critical thinking necessary to drive safely.

The latest update to our driver's education presentation put students in the front seat of the most common traffic crashes. This gave high schoolers an opportunity to break down high-risk situations, identify common failures of logic and behavior, and consider how to avoid them.

Students also learned about Chicago Complete Streets infrastructure, such as pedestrian refuge islands and bike boxes, giving them a sense of how to navigate critical infrastructure. We also invited them to use their imaginations to explore future solutions and streetscape elements. As our streets change shape with smarter and safer designs, SAFE Ambassadors' programming continues to evolve to ensure the public's knowledge and understanding keeps pace with the changes and updates in traffic safety infrastructure and practices.



Park District Youth Engagement

In partnership with the Chicago Park District, we had the opportunity to visit day camps and provide educational safety presentations and mobility activities. With the return of the Junior Ambassadors after a year off, we provided bicycling tips and helmet fittings to more than 1,500 children and teens at various Chicago parks.

In the past, the SAFE Ambassadors offered Learn to Ride classes exclusively for adults. This year our team collaborated with the Chicago Park District to debut a new class for children ages 6-12, offering a new age group the opportunity to learn this valuable skill. Our goals for this service were to promote independence, instill confidence, and foster self-sufficiency for new riders.

Hosted at either Portage Park or Humboldt Park, each two-hour class accommodated six children at a time, ensuring each child received personal instruction and interaction. We conducted 11 Kids Learn to Ride classes, reaching 44 children during this pilot-project year – made possible thanks to the skills and hard work of the Junior Ambassadors.

As with any new program, the Kids Learn to Ride pilot had its share of learning opportunities for the team. At the beginning of the season, we were limited to teaching children who had access to their own bikes, leaving some kids unable to participate. Luckily, through a generous donation from Working Bikes, we were able to secure our own teaching bikes and expand the class to more children.



**Educated more
than **1,500**
children and teens
at parks**

Parent feedback:

"I just wanted to say how amazing the Learn to Ride experience was—you are awesome, and your instructors were so great! My son absolutely loved the person he worked with today, and the limited conversations I had with him and others: They seem like such great humans. Thanks for putting this together, and I hope everyone else recognizes how wonderful this program and you all are."

– Humboldt Park parent

"My daughter just completed the class this evening at Portage Park and I wanted to shoot you an email to express how insanely impressed I was by your staff! [The Junior Ambassadors] were incredible. My daughter has been terrified and hesitant about learning how to ride a bike after having quite a few hard falls in the past. They were amazing at calming her down and motivating her to keep trying until she got it! As a parent, it's exciting to watch your child overcome a previous fear! I fully anticipated this being something that would take quite a few tries. I did not expect her to be riding by the end of just 2 hours! I absolutely love this program and I hope it stays so other kiddos can benefit from these 3 coaches. Thank you for creating such a safe and motivating place for my daughter to grow!"

– Portage Park parent



Learn to Ride

This year, 177 Chicagoans took advantage of the SAFE Ambassadors' free Learn to Ride classes, made possible with the partnership of the Chicago Park District, Chicago Center for Green Technology, and Lawndale Christian Health Center to secure locations for the classes. Divvy/Lyft provided bikes for Learn to Ride students, and Spin and Lime donated helmets for each participant. From June through September, we scheduled 56 classes—44 at the beginner level; 6 at our new Skill-BUILDER level, meant to strengthen the ability to ride with control in vehicular traffic; and 6 Road Ride classes, which introduced riders to different types of bike lanes and helped build confidence in the presence of real-life traffic challenges.

More than 600 people expressed interest in our classes this year, with an uptick in engagement after media coverage linked us to the Bike Chicago program. Every week we registered up to 10 new students for each 2-hour class and held up to 5 classes at different sites such as La Villita Park, the Chicago Center for Green Technology, CAN TV, Piotrowski Park, Harmony Community Church, and Seward Park. Although students are encouraged to bring their own bikes, most over age 16 accepted the offer of learning on a Divvy Classic bike for free. Along with our personalized coaching and support, we fitted each student with a free helmet, compliments of Divvy, Lime, or Spin.

Over two-thirds of the students in our Beginner Learn to Ride series achieved their goal of becoming bikers for the first time or after decades out of the saddle. This year we also expanded our program to offer classes with Spanish-speaking staff – 17 students requested a Spanish-language option, and we fulfilled every request!

It is very rewarding to see Chicagoans, including several families, learn to ride a bike together, come to our classes, face challenges, succeed, and support each other to become more confident riders.

Learn to Ride Student feedback:

"Thank you all so much for today! I really enjoyed riding and feeling confident on a bike again! This is a great program, and I'm very happy I found it! ... I can't wait to attend more classes!"



Learn to Ride Student feedback:

“This is a fantastic program and I’ve had a great experience. Kudos to the entire team for their commitment, sacrifice and for doing such a wonderful job.”

“Your team was very helpful. I really appreciate all the work you put in and your team’s desire to serve. I don’t know many adults who would be willing to serve the way your team did, especially to adults. Thank you again for all you do!!!”

This year we expanded our classes for students eager to go beyond the basics, and we refined our content to create two additional classes: Skill-BUILDER and Road Ride. The Skill-BUILDER class provides instruction and practice in making turns, looking around while riding with control to check for others, and signaling before turns.

For our most advanced lesson, Road Ride, we used Seward Park as the start and end point and took riders on a route through Old Town and Lincoln Park that included every type of city-installed bike lane and of course lots of Saturday afternoon traffic surprises! We had 18 total students in this year’s classes—8 who had taken our other classes, and 10 for whom it was their first time taking a Learn to Ride class.

Public demand for our top-tier lesson outweighed our capacity to staff classes, showing that Chicagoans of all ages are interested in using bikes to get where they’re going every day. Dozens of others who started at the beginner level expressed interest in completing all three Learn to Ride classes and requested that the Ambassadors offer more class options in the future. To build capacity for years to come, our program is acquiring a fleet of bicycles with a wider range of sizes to make bike riding accessible to Chicagoans of all statures.

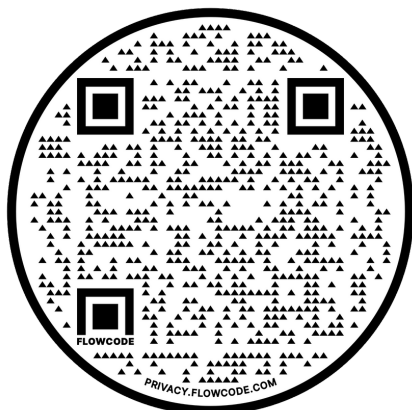


Appendix A

Social Media



Junior Ambassador Video



<https://bit.ly/JBASafetyProgram>

Appendix B: 2022 Community Rides

| RIDE | PARNTER |
|---|------------------------------|
| We Ride Juntos | Universidad Popular |
| Second Annual Chicago Bike Collective | Equiticity |
| Open Boulevards - Drexel | CDOT |
| Bike to School Day | Nettelhorst Elementary |
| Belmont Cragin Community Ride | Northwest Center |
| Ride of Silence Ride | Ride of Silence Chicago |
| Biking Out Negativity | Boxing Out Negativity |
| Equiticity Magic of Music Ride Series (3 rides) | Equiticity |
| Big Marsh Bike Convergence | Friends of Big Marsh |
| Bike 31st Ward | 31st Ward |
| Getcha Mind Right Edition | Roll N' Peace #9 |
| Bike Rodeo and Slow Roll | Slow Roll |
| 7th Annual Community Bike Ride & Wellness | We Keep You Rollin' |
| CCR19 Bike Tour | Chicago Race Riot Route |
| 45th Ward Bike Event | 45th Ward |
| Bike Ride Event with Haugen Elementary | (CIS) Communities In Schools |
| Bronzeville Summer Nights bike tour | Divvy |
| Bike the Ward | 2nd Ward |
| Magic of Music Ride Series | Equiticity |

SAFE Sponsors



SAFE Partners

CAN TV

Chicago Charter schools

Chicago Fire Department

Chicago Police Department

Chicago Private schools

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Park District

Communities in Schools

Divvy for Everyone

Greater Good Studios (Vision Zero NW
side engagement)

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White

League of American Bicyclists

Northwestern Medicine

Rush University Medical Center

Swedish Hospital

Working Bikes

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LzByZHLPEkharUbX7](https://photos.app.goo.gl/LzByZHLPEkharUbX7)